

To: the Commission...

From: Dr. Mark Smith, faculty adviser, KTRM—FM, Kirksville, MO

Re: *Report on Broadcast Localism, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 1/24/08*

Please accept these comments in regard to the local proposal and its impact on small, noncommercial radio broadcasters. I will address the most pertinent topics in the FCC's proposal that affect our station and the community.

- **Ending unattended operation.** The proposal would require staffing our noncommercial station during our entire 24-hour broadcast day. This rule would negatively impact small college/university broadcasters, such as KTRM, which do not possess the volunteer staff or funding to have personnel in the station during *all* hours of operation. Ironically, this would mean less service to Kirksville in the overnight hours and semester breaks during which the staff utilizes unattended programming services to provide entertainment and information. Further, the rule would mean that listeners would be without timely weather bulletins provided through our EAS system during these unattended hours; if we off the air at night because of our inability to staff the station how does this service the listener? Further, as a campus community, we have a sizable population of students who study late night (including KTRM announcers). Again, because we do not possess adequate volunteer announcers and must exist on a four-figure annual operating budget, service to Kirksville would suffer if unattended operation were ended. Finally, what is the Commission's stand if someone files a time-share against an educational broadcaster who cannot afford live (especially evening/nighttime) operations during scheduled school breaks? Does this mean the time share would be granted? This would be extremely punitive for educational broadcasters.
- **Advisory Boards.** Requiring *quarterly* meetings of a Community Board will adversely affect our ability to actually serve our community. I acknowledge that local input is welcomed; however, requiring a small station to plan and implement quarterly meetings detracts from the ability *to actually provide programming that serves the community*. An annual meeting that sets the tone for a programming year would not seem unreasonable as long as stations are granted latitude to determine the Board's makeup and its annual meeting schedule. Stations should then reserve the right to develop programming by utilizing suggestions from the Board as deemed appropriate to serve the public interest. Put another way, it should be the broadcasters' final decision, not a Board. The Board would be advisory only.

Finally, any proposal to have *every* local broadcaster conduct “town hall” meetings in a community our size means that the public will quickly lose interest because of the eight radio and TV signals with primary coverage in a community of fewer than 17,000 residents. Does this mean that every station in the ownership group must conduct a meeting? This appears extremely burdensome for the public not to mention small broadcasters.

- **Standardized Disclosure Forms—Issues Programs Lists.** In effect, we would be reporting everything we air sans entertainment. This has the potential to greatly burden an all-ready over-worked student management staff. KTRM already posts its Issues-Programs Lists online for all to access. Further, I have no problem with requiring stations to remind listeners of those Lists online; however, I believe that the time has come to end studio access to Lists. If someone can afford to drive to the radio station, they can afford to find a public library with Internet access to Lists. Further, a standardized List is a “one size fits all” which seems to thwart the meaning of “localism” among small and large markets. I suggest placing the Lists online and let the public determine, under current quarterly reporting guidelines, whether the station should be contacted with programming suggestions. I see current List regulations as a means of reminding the broadcaster what has been achieved the last quarter and as starting point for conversations with the community...if listeners chose to take part.

We offer proof that the marketplace has, indeed, worked as an effective mechanism to serve the Kirksville, MO area. Our numerous regional and national awards for broadcast information services, proudly displayed on our radio station lobby walls, are a testament to the service we already provide.

In sum, it is desire of this small market, noncommercial broadcaster that the Commission consider any rulemaking in terms of abilities of small staffs to comply with rules that affect stations with dozens or hundreds of employees. Respectfully, do not add to the burden of young broadcasters in a small university setting, who are busy serving our community with alternative entertainment and informational programming. Our students work hard to produce news programming and engaging public affairs offerings. Our staffs, however, do not have the capacity to undertake the burdens outlined in the rulemaking that may actually detract from serving the public.

Mark Smith, Adviser, KTRM, Kirksville

